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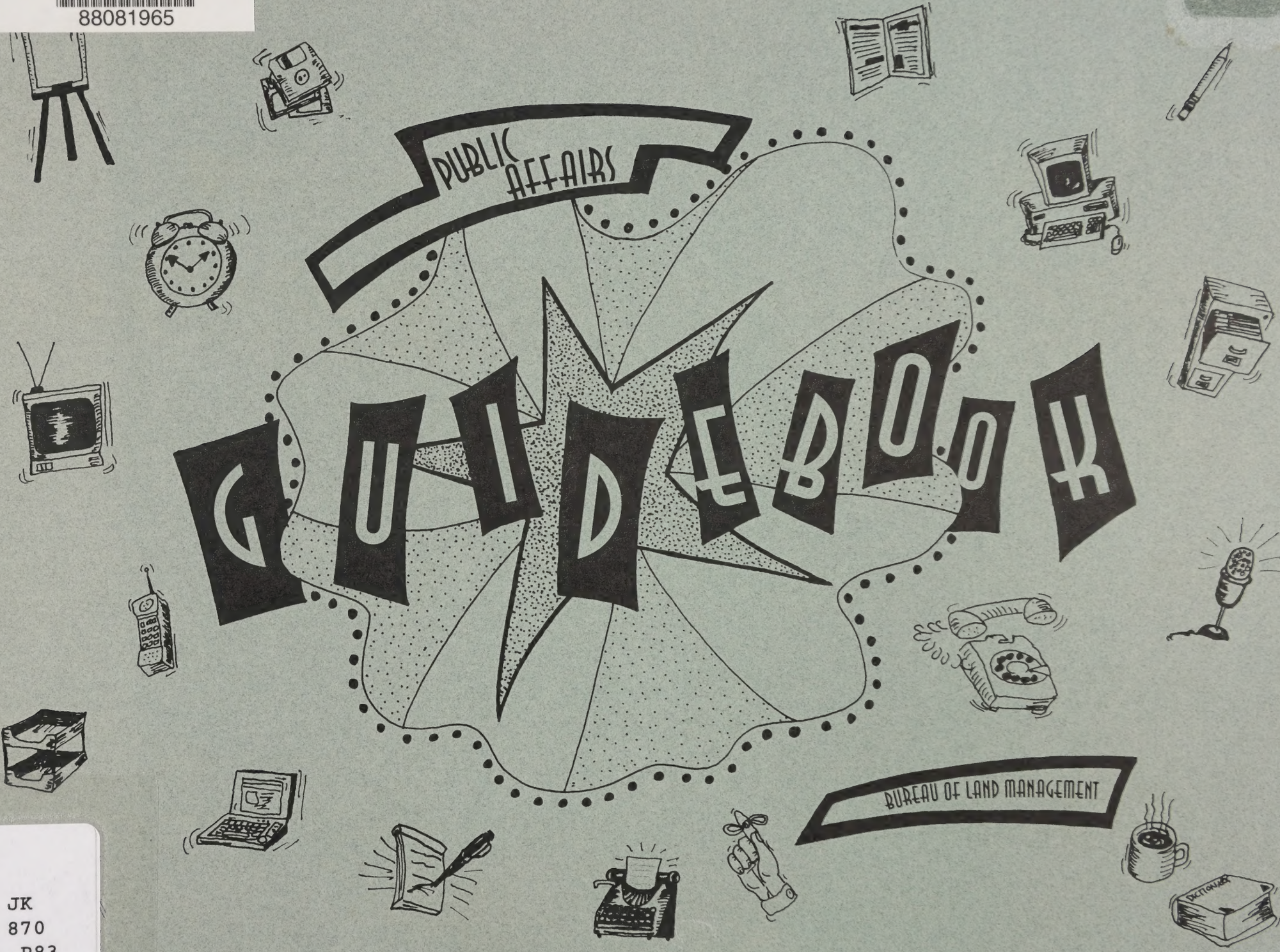

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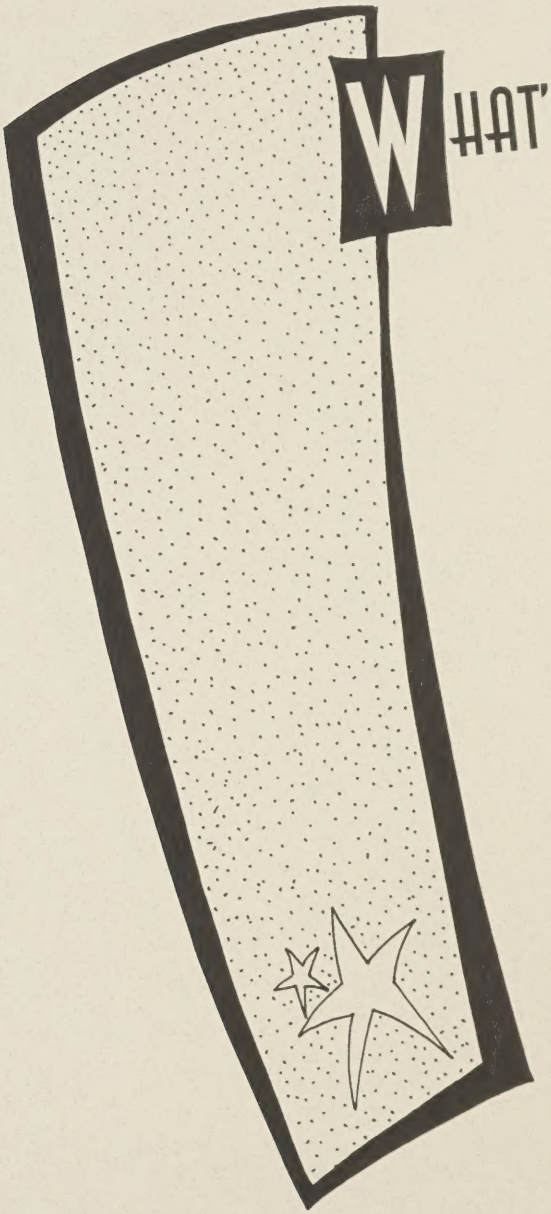

WHAT'S IN HERE?

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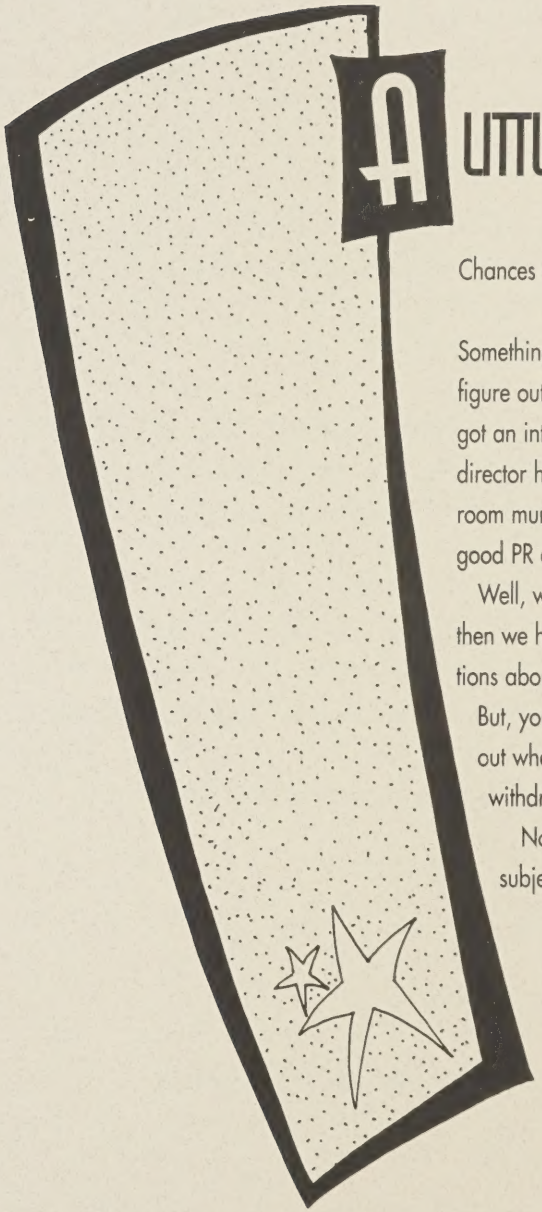


A LITTLE BIT ABOUT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Chances are you've been in a situation something like this:

Something has gone wrong. You're in a hurriedly called meeting with a few specialists and a manager or two, trying to figure out a way to get out of a pickle. Word of the problem is already spreading around the community, and you've got an interview with a newspaper reporter in an hour. The local congressman's office has a call in to you. The state director has just sent you an e-mail, which you're trying to put off reading. As the stomach juices churn, a person in the room mumbles, "Do you think we should call external affairs?" Someone nods. Everyone agrees they could use some good PR about now.

Well, we've been there, too. And while we love receiving calls asking for our assistance, if you've waited too long, then we have a sad message for you: Sorry, but we aren't going to be able to help you much, other than some suggestions about damage control. We don't wear a cape with a big red "S" printed underneath.

But, you might be thinking, isn't that what public affairs does? You know, they're the spin doctors. They help bail us out when we need it. They build up the proverbial bank of good will, so that when we get in trouble, we can make a withdrawal and still retain our credibility with the public.

No, that's not what public affairs does. We can't pull a rabbit out of the hat on demand. Since we're on the subject, let's spell out a few more things that public affairs can't do. Call them "The Three Myths of Public Affairs."

THE THREE MYTHS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

1

Public affairs is a quick fix for problems.

Most of the problems BLM gets into are elaborate in nature. They took us months or years to develop and have a complicated background. Sorry, but no one in this agency, or anywhere else, has come up with the pixie dust to sprinkle over our controversies and make them go away. It took us a long time to get into messes and it almost always takes a long time for us to clean them up.

2

Public affairs makes problems go away.

This is similar to the first myth, but not quite the same. Some people labor under the false notion that if we put out enough slick pamphlets and maps, visit enough schools, join enough community groups, run the PTO and coach Little League, that we'll somehow be immune from controversy. Not so, folks. It will still find us anyway. Not that all those activities are bad — they're not — but they won't shield us for very long (our guess: about 16 seconds) from controversy.

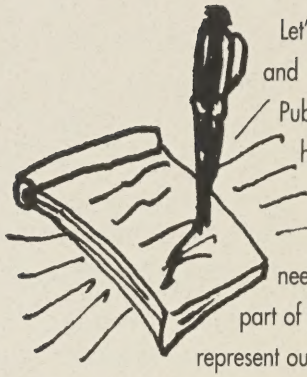
3

Public affairs creates an image for BLM.

Most of our image is created by how people are treated when they visit the office and ask for a map. The one-on-one encounters with BLM employees do more to shape our image than all the coverage on the six o'clock news tonight. In most cases, we still win fans and make enemies one at a time. So let's now state the obvious: Each point of contact between BLM and the public shapes our image and determines our credibility. ***That makes all BLM employees public affairs specialists.***

Okay, we've told you what we're not. So what does public affairs do? Anything, other than put out all those nice brochures? This may sound a little bit like a textbook definition, but hang in there with us. Here's a list that describes what public affairs is:

- ★ It's the practice of working with people to promote understanding of BLM practices and policies.
- ★ It is a planned effort to inform and influence the public, based on acceptable professional performance.
- ★ It is a planned reaction — so that when a certain step is taken or decision is announced, we'll know who will react in what way. That includes how we'll react within the agency.
- ★ It is an individual and organizational commitment to provide the best possible service to the public.



Let's summarize. At best, public affairs solves or prevents problems, promotes understanding, serves as the public's advocate to management and helps set the organizational standard for public service. At it's worst, it is a weak attempt to excuse or explain poor professional performance. Public affairs is not a luxury. For many years, public affairs people seemed to have a complex about their value to the organization. "A frill," we'd hear old crusty managers snort. "Not real field people." In this day, when information is the most valuable commodity of all, when BLM is under a microscope as no other time, it's vital to have a public affairs presence.

BLM is in the spotlight, and that's not going to change. A staff of public affairs specialists can only begin to complete all the work that needs to be done. ***All of us need to consider that public affairs is part of our job.*** You alone may be able to make, reinforce or break our image as part of your day-to-day routine. Here's an axiom that makes a lot of sense: to those you encounter, you are the BLM. How you present yourself and represent our agency will determine to a great extent how that rancher, county commissioner, hiker, off-highway vehicle enthusiast or hunter perceives BLM. We're all in this together!

Public affairs is an art, not science. No one can take a cookbook approach to public affairs challenges and succeed for long. What we'd like to do, though, is share suggestions about what has a good chance of succeeding, in general terms. You'll have to rely on your own experience and good judgment when issues boil over, but this booklet could give you a few good ideas and get you thinking along the right lines. Call it a starting point.

So back to the mess in the office, and the scary prospect of transfers to obscure towns in Nevada. Maybe it wasn't preventable, but with good public affairs work before the problem arose, it might not have reached crisis proportions.

Call in the public affairs people? Sure. But it's best to do so is long *before* the problem takes on a life of its own. There. The first message of this book has already been presented. ***Consult with public affairs people when the train is leaving the station, not when it ends up in a wreck.***

Sit back and enjoy this booklet. It's meant to be interesting and a little bit fun. And if we've done it right, then you'll probably learn something along the way. By the end, we hope that you consider yourself a top-notch practitioner of public affairs!

COMMUNICATION PLANNING

BLM is a great organization for planning. We have people who have made a career of it, although only heaven knows why. (Okay, sorry planners. We know you love your work.) We have allotment management plans, resource management plans, habitat management plans, herd management plans, plans to evacuate our buildings, plans for parking at our buildings, safety plans, site plans, plans that cover whole river basins, plans that cover small, specific areas, emergency plans, plans that help us formulate plans and meetings that are held to figure out how we can plan our plans. An exaggeration? Huh-uh. We're a little nutso when it comes to plans.

So why is it that we do so little in the way of communication planning?

Beats us. Never have figured that one out.

As Julie Andrews once warbled in a very famous movie about the Von Trapp family, let's start at the very beginning. When do we need a communication plan?

Unfortunately, there isn't a clear answer to that, but we do have criteria that should start bells ringing and lights flashing. Call it an exercise in recognizing red flags and raging bulls. Here's the list.

- ★ When we're about to do something that we know will cause controversy.
- ★ When elected officials are interested or involved.
- ★ When there is more than just casual news media interest.
- ★ When a top official, say the director of BLM or the Secretary of the Interior, is involved.
- ★ When a small problem has the potential to become a major issue.
- ★ When there is a threat to health or safety.
- ★ When any prominent citizen or organization is involved. (And consider any BLM employee a prominent citizen, especially if something seems amiss.)
- ★ When your activity or decision may affect a large number of people.
- ★ When a project is going to cost a huge sum of money.
- ★ When anything has the appearance of being illegal or unethical.
- ★ When your gut instinct says we're headed for trouble. (This may be the surest sign of all!)

If you can check off one of these criteria, chances are good you'll need a plan. Two or more and you'd better put down this booklet and go talk to a public affairs specialist and your manager right now.

Let's say that it is obvious that you're going to need a communication plan. What should go into it?

For a moment, we'll pretend we live in the best of all worlds, and you have sufficient time and resources to put together your communication plan. No two plans are ever alike, but the best ones have a few things in common.

First, ***a background or summary of the issue.***
This need not be long, probably never more than a half-page. It gives everyone a common reference point and basic understanding of the situation.

You probably next want to ***identify your objectives or desired outcome.*** It really does help to know where you want to end up. Be specific. Too often, we say something like, "Oh, we all know where we want to come out on this one. We want public support and understanding and everyone to think we're okay." Those kind of statements aren't worth the time it takes to write them.

Next, ***identify the issues raised by the action.*** Be brutally honest in this section. It's better to be prepared for an issue that doesn't come up than not be prepared for one that turns into a major point of contention.

It's always helpful to ***identify key publics*** — organizations or individuals that will be affected by the action. You might include a sentence or two about how these key publics will react. This grouping of key publics can easily become your contact list, when it comes time to check in with those most interested in your action.

For consistency's sake, ***identify simple messages*** that you'd like to convey about the issue or activity. Then stick with them. Notice the word "simple." With any group or individual, with any reporter or elected official, you're doing an outstanding job if you can convey — and they remember — one or two simple messages. We have a tendency to get too technically oriented and too verbose in our messages. Make the message straightforward enough that your entire organization can latch on to it and use it, if needs be. The old acronym "KISS" (Keep It Simple, Stupid) is a good rule to follow.

THEY WHO FAIL TO PLAN PLAN TO FAIL . . .

Yeah, it's what your mom told you when you left for college. But it's one piece of advice that you should pay attention to. History is filled with examples of people who didn't have a plan and ended up in trouble. Remember the Exxon Valdez disaster of March 1989? More than 240,000 barrels of oil gushed from a freighter run aground off Alaska's coastline. The corporate black eye that Exxon received form that disaster was based not only on the environmental damage, but also from the mixed and confused messages that the company and industry sent out over the next few weeks. Obviously, no communications message or plan was put in place before it was too late, as the company tried to downplay and dismiss the effects of the spill. Few people will ever forget the oil industry executive who stated on national television, "The American petroleum industry will not pay one dime for the moral outrage of Americans watching sea otters die on television!" Wrong message! Wrong attitude! Wrong audience!
And Exxon continues to pay for the damage today.

Probably the next component of the communication plan is to line out a section called ***"methods, schedules and actions."*** (Or anything else that fits. We're not fussy about titles.) This is the nuts-and-bolts part of the plan, where assignments are given, complete with dates and times, and whatever other follow up items are noted. You can make this section as simple as a list, divide it among short-term, mid-term and long-term actions, or however else it seems appropriate to organize it. Again, whatever works best for you and your circumstances is how you should approach it.

Finally, select a time to sit down and ***review and evaluate while the plan is in effect.*** If the plan isn't working, it will be apparent, and you'll know that you need to tinker with it some more, if not wad it up, toss it out, and start all over. We do a pretty good job of looking back and figuring out what worked and what didn't after the issue is over, but we don't do many evaluations in mid-stream. We need to do more, especially if the current is about to sweep us under.

Now, being an astute reader, you're probably saying something like this: "Great. But this isn't the perfect world and sometimes we have little or no time to react. What about those instances?"

These plans need not be elaborate, beautifully designed documents. One of the better communication plans in BLM in recent years was written on a napkin as two people conversed at a restaurant. More than a year later, the public affairs people involved in the matter were still referring to the original notes on the napkin. So much for fancy plans!

If the vultures are circling and you have mere minutes to figure out a strategy, don't panic. Boil it down to answering these questions: ***Who is involved, what do they need to know and what messages will I deliver?*** That's a minimal approach, but it will get you through the crunch in better shape than trying to wing it or dodge the issue. You'll be surprised at how much progress you can make in one of those two-minute drills.

When all the dust settles, and you've avoided a quick transfer to a BLM outpost, and after you've taken a day or two of annual leave to assist in the mental health recovery process, get together with the other people involved in the action and have a review of how everything went. Sure, there is no boilerplate approach to these problems, but you're way ahead in the game if you put your experience to work for you. Next time, it might save you from downing a bottle of antacids in a single afternoon.

Of course, you're not alone in this. The Idaho State Office has a few people with loads of experience. They can help you work through the issue and formulate a plan. And their advice is absolutely free, other than they may hit you up for lunch the next time you're in town.

The important thing is *plan*, whether it's a simple or elaborate undertaking. You'll be way ahead. Your peers will respect you. Your boss will smile warmly as you enter a room. You're sure to get that promotion that you've hungered for.

Well, maybe we're stretching things a bit, ***but it can't hurt to have a plan!***

PRESENTATIONS

You've heard about the fears of speaking before a group. Maybe you've felt them! According to many surveys, the fear of speaking generally ranks second on most people's list of what they worry about — right behind death, and well ahead of losing your job!

Yet, most of us will have the chance to speak before a group or make presentations. We should, in fact, do more public presentations, and be more aggressive in finding opportunities to speak. (The upside of all this is you'll probably get your dinner or lunch paid for.) Regardless of the subject matter, if you're aware of a few tips, you can pull off your presentation professionally and with a little flair that will keep your audience tuned in. Let's review a few tactics that will help you receive roses and avoid rotten tomatoes the next time you stand up, clear your throat, and begin speaking to a group.

ALWAYS HAVE YOUR PRESENTATION OR SPEECH OUTLINED

Even the most articulate and knowledgeable of employees can't often wing a presentation. If you don't do the footwork before, you're liable to flop. At the minimum, have an outline in hand, highlighting the keys points you want to make.

KEEP IT CONCISE

Few things turn off an audience more quickly than the feeling that their time is being wasted. Keep your remarks to the point and move along at the proper pace. More is not better. Remember, the most influential speech in American history, The Gettysburg Address, took less than five minutes to deliver and contained fewer than 300 words. Yet it at once captured the feeling of a nation and set our country on a new course.

NEVER APOLOGIZE OR MAKE EXCUSES

Want to completely lose an audience in the first minute of your speech or presentation? Make an excuse. "Well, I'm only here because the boss is out of town and I'm not too well prepared, but I'll go ahead anyway." Or, "I've been so busy that I really haven't had time to prepare ..." Make a statement like those and you can pretty much assume that 90 percent of your audience will mentally check out on you. And why shouldn't they? In a matter of a few seconds, you have told them: (1) You weren't important enough for my boss to be here; (2) You weren't important enough for me to prepare for; and (3) All I really want to do is get this over and be out of here.

READ YOUR AUDIENCE

Signs that you are connecting with your audience:

1. Good eye contact
2. Heads are up, eyes are open
3. Lots of feedback if you're making a presentation, either verbally or in other ways, such as assiduous note taking, heads nodding, or smiles.
4. You feel good about the way it is going.

Signs that you are miles away from your audience:

1. Little or no eye contact. Audience is staring at the ceiling, or eyes are pointed toward the floor.
2. People are yawning, stretching or dozing.
3. Little feedback. If you ask a question and no one answers, then something is amiss.
4. Your fondest wish at that moment is not to win the lottery, but just to have your presentation or speech over.
5. Side conversations are frequent, little note taking is going on, and half the class appears to be doodling.
6. You feel crummy about the way it is going.

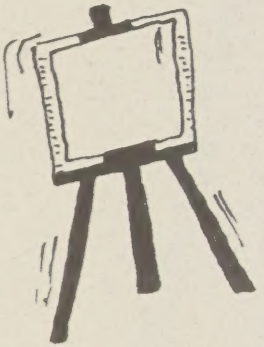
> *"The 'key' to success as a public speaker ... is to be real. If you try to be what you are not up there on the speaker's rostrum, you will not get away with it in all probability. The situation magnifies you. Therefore, if you are being phony, the audience will spot it a mile away . . . if you do not have a clear idea of what you are trying to say, there is no way in the world your audience is going to understand what you are talking about."*
>
> Charles Osgood, CBS news reporter

If you are pleased with your presentation or speech, keep right on going. If your audience is struggling, then it may be time for a change: a stretch break, ask more questions, break your audience into discussion groups, simplify your presentation, incorporate more teaching or visual aids, or condense it and sit down. It may not be all your fault. The toughest times for a presentation or speech are right after lunch and late in the day. Any person making a presentation within a couple of hours of the end of a long conference or meeting is going to face a tired, inattentive audience. Adjust accordingly.

USE GREAT VISUAL AIDS

The day of the grease pen on a plain, clear overhead has passed. With the technology available at most BLM offices, you should be able to put pizazz into your presentations. Ditto for handouts. Never, ever copy a page from a book or manual and slap it on to the overhead. It's deadly dull and suggests to the audience that they aren't important enough for you to prepare a good presentation. Anyone who says, "I know you can't read this in the back, but I'll go ahead and put it up anyway," ought to be booed and hissed unmercifully.

NEVER READ TO PEOPLE WHAT THEY CAN READ FOR THEMSELVES



Ever been in a classroom when someone either hands out a document or puts a cluttered overhead on the projector and says, "Let's read through this together"? Congratulations, you've just boarded the bus bound for Snooze City. Unlike children, adults do not like to be read to in a classroom situation. You might as well slip your audience a sleeping pill.

DON'T TALK GOBBLEDYGOOK OR USE TOO MANY ACRONYMS

Enough said.

THE SPICE OF LIFE IS VARIETY

Use different teaching techniques. Don't lecture, unless it's a speech to a large group. Even then, leave time for an interchange of questions, answers and ideas. Offer frequent breaks. Mix it up!

PRACTICE

Get a trusted friend, a significant other, or someone who owes you a favor, and do a rehearsal. Yes, it takes extra time, and may just be one more thing to do on your growing list of headaches, but it might also be the best preparatory step you take. At least consider it.

None of these tips will guarantee you a standing ovation, but they should help you to be more effective. So don't view your presentation or speech as a near-death experience. . . instead, let it be a chance to put your best foot forward!

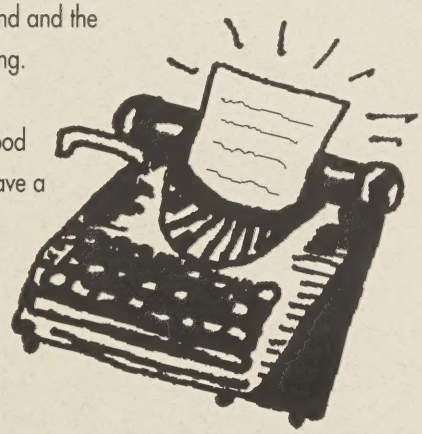
NEWS MEDIA

Volumes have been written on how to deal with the news media and many consultants have made nice careers and been paid outlandish fees for promising they can make anyone look better on the six o'clock news. We're going to tackle the same subject and cover it in a few pages, and the cost will be absolutely zilch to you. What's more, what we'll tell you won't be that much different than what a consultant will tell you. Think about it as you prepare to write the check that will fund his next two-week cruise to the Caribbean.

Let's start with the basics. Why do we have to mess with the media at all? Wouldn't it be nice if we could just blow them off?

If that's your feeling, then it's time for an attitude overhaul.

We work with the news media because we don't have a choice — and that's good. Remember, BLM is a public agency. We don't have the luxury of closing our doors and shutting out any segment of the public. We can't tell the news media to mind their own business, because our business ***is*** their business. They are going to do a story with you — or without you. People have a right to know what is going on in BLM offices and on the public land and the news media is the best way for the largest audiences to find out what is happening.



The news media is powerful. It can help shape impressions and images, for good and bad. The best approach is to be prepared for working with reporters, have a message to tell, and follow through as needed. Anything less, and we're going to dig ourselves into a hole.

ELEMENTS OF THE NEWS

We sometimes hear, "That's not news! Why do they want to do a story on that!" That reveals what can be a fatal flaw in thinking for a career-minded employee. Okay, here it comes in plain, bold letters: **IT IS NOT OUR JOB TO TELL A REPORTER WHAT IS AND IS NOT NEWS.** If a reporter thinks it's news, the chances are 99% that the reporter is right.

What makes news? Here are a few of the benchmarks.

- ★ TIMELY. That means something is happening *now.*
- ★ CONFLICT. Differences of opinion draw reporters like sharks to blood in the water, which isn't a bad analogy.
- ★ CONSEQUENCE. Will this affect a lot of people? If it does, it's news.
- ★ HUMAN INTEREST. If it has a strong "people peg," then it's going to be of interest.
- ★ PROXIMITY. Is it close to home? A kidnaping in South Carolina won't be news in Boise, but a kidnaping in Meridian will make the front page in most of Idaho.
- ★ NOVELTY. Is it a little different, unusual, or yes, even bizarre? Then it is news!
- ★ PROMINENCE. Does it involve a well-known person or company? Citing a rancher for trespass probably isn't a big deal. Citing a rancher who holds a statewide-elected office is.

What elements could have a link to BLM? All of them! We have only one conclusion, then: BLM is going to be in the news. Better get ready.

TIME FOR THE INTERVIEW

We're not into reinventing the wheel here, so the following tips are taken from a booklet published by the Idaho State Office called, *No Sweat: A Guide to Understanding the News Media.* (If you'd like a copy, call ISO 912. If you'd like to arrange the course for which the booklet was designed, call ISO 912. If you'd like a home demonstration of the amazing Veg-O-Matic, call ISO 912. "It slices! It dices! It does your TV interviews for you!" Just kidding about the last one.)

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

To a great extent, how you put your time to use before the interview will determine how you come across on the front page or evening news. A few minutes of preparation is a great investment, no matter how confident you are and how well you know the subject. (Historical footnote: some of the most damaging interviews ever in the agency were done by people who were overconfident and did not prepare. Be humble.) Here's how you can prepare for the interview.

TRY TO GET SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPIC

It's okay to ask a reporter about the topic if you don't know what it is. If it's a phone interview and you don't feel prepared, ask if you can call back in a few minutes. Then, call back in a few minutes because your credibility is on the line.

HAVE A MESSAGE IN MIND

ALWAYS have a message or two in mind. Know ahead of time what point you want to get across. This is the most important single step you can take to help ensure the interview will bring you looks of admiration from your peers and not stares of disbelief from your supervisor. This is so important that we'll say it once more, with feeling. **ALWAYS HAVE A MESSAGE IN MIND!**

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PERSON TALKING

The technical wizard is not always the best person to speak for the agency. Now, bring your booklet up really close ... we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings here ... but many times it is not the boss who is the best spokesperson, either. Let's just call it our dirty little secret. Some bosses just don't come across well on camera or in print. Some public affairs people are the same way. Select wisely your spokesperson. It should be someone who is calm, looks comfortable, can speak in terms the public can understand, isn't having a bad hair day, and has a firm grasp of the issue.

Should the public affairs people or top management do all the talking? Nope. Who is better talking about a habitat improvement project than the wildlife biologist who developed it? Who is better qualified to represent the agency on a fire rehab project than the range con who put the plan together? Use common sense about the best people to talk with a reporter or go on camera. That's all we're saying.

ANTICIPATE TOUGH QUESTIONS, THEN ROUGH OUT AN ANSWER IN YOUR MIND

A reporter who doesn't ask tough questions, even on a routine story, isn't much of a reporter. Don't take it personally or be offended. Instead, be prepared. Ask yourself beforehand, "What questions do I *not* want asked?" Then ask them and get an answer roughed out.

REHEARSE THE INTERVIEW IF IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE

Use your public affairs person, or State Office PA people to help you prepare. If they're not available, rehearse with a co-worker, a spouse, the custodian, the newspaper boy or whoever else wanders by.

REMEMBER, IT'S OKAY TO MAKE A MISTAKE

If you brick an answer, you can always ask a reporter to repeat the question and 99 percent of the time he or she will. Reporters are also interested in getting accurate information out to the public.

SIZE UP YOUR AUDIENCE

How is Joe Citizen, his wife and their 2.3 children going to view this story? Friendly? Not so friendly? Hostile? Outraged? Warm and fuzzy? Don't assume everyone is going to be sympathetic because you are a hardworking, conscientious federal employee. In fact, it's more prudent to assume just the opposite, and be pleasantly surprised if you do play to a friendly audience.

RELAX

Remember, five billion people in China didn't even know you were on TV.

Most news stories follow a formula. Once you get the knack of the formula, the rest is easy. To help you focus, ask yourself these basic questions:

- ★ "What is the issue?"
- ★ "What will the reporter want to know?"
- ★ "Why is it important to someone?"
- ★ And, "Who is affected by it?"

If you answer these questions, even Mike Wallace on a cranky day shouldn't catch you off guard.

Public employees are held to a higher standard of professional behavior, like it or not. You might be surprised how an obscure bureaucrat can be plastered all over the news if he or she steps out of line.

In the 1980s, BLM in western Oregon was experiencing an upswing in firewood theft problems. The economy was horrible, the unemployment percentage was in the upper teens, and the black market for firewood was thriving. Selling stolen firewood was a quick way to put a few bucks in your pocket, or a fairly inexpensive way to keep your house warm in the winter. Nevertheless, it was wrong.

BLM cracked down on firewood thieves, trying to curb the practice. Patrols were stepped up and the number of citations issued rose. Imagine the public reaction when three of the agency's own employees were cited for taking firewood without a permit! Oops.

Firewood theft hadn't been much of a topic in the news until then. Suddenly, it was front-page news. It took months for that particular BLM black eye to heal. Sometimes, we do it to ourselves.

REMEMBER, you are the agency. And someone is always bound to be watching.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Your moment of fame is at hand. The reporter has clipped the microphone on and the camera is rolling. The first question is now rolling off the silver tongue of the reporter. You are comfortable, calm and prepared. Take a deep breath . . .WAIT! Is there something else you should know?

Certainly. Let's put together another list! Once the interview begins, here are a few more tips to help you.

- Speak in personal terms. You want to come across as a real human being because that's what you are. Don't say things like, "It is the position of the Bureau ..." or "According to our regulations . . . " Speak in personal terms. Say, "We think . . ."

- If you don't want it on the airwaves or in print, DON'T SAY IT! Even if the microphones are off or you think the interview is over. So many otherwise smart, savvy people stumble on this. By the way, there is no such thing as "off the record" with a reporter. You'll get burned if you assume otherwise. The moment you say something about "going off the record" is the moment a reporter begins to plot how he or she can get you to say it for broadcast or publication. It's part of the game.

- Try to get your most important message or facts in at the beginning of the interview. Your answers should be about 10 seconds long, 20 seconds at the most, regardless of the news medium.

- Don't lose your cool, even if you're being badgered or bullied. Angry people always (and we mean always as in 100 percent of the time) come across as jerks.

- Test time: If you don't know what the answer is to a reporter's question, the correct response is (a) I don't know; (b) I don't know; or (c) I don't know. Congratulations! If you picked the answer marked "I don't know," you are absolutely correct. Do not fake, bluff, lie or speculate. Promise to get an answer, then follow through.

- Don't try to be cute or funny. Leave that to Jay Leno. He gets paid more than you and is probably better at it.

There's more . . .

★ Okay, this is basic, but it happens too much, so listen up. Avoid speaking for other agencies, field offices, or state offices. Avoid speaking for your supervisor, the state director, the national director, or anyone else higher on the food chain than you, unless you have their specific authorization to do so or are willing to bet your job that's what he or she would want you to say. Do not speculate on the meaning of what an elected official said, nor should you speak for them. Stick only to topics that are within your area of expertise and within your authority to comment on.

★ Avoid calling other people or agencies names (yes, it does happen occasionally, and then our mess becomes even bigger), do not talk down to them, or try to discredit them. You are not Sam Donaldson. Be glad that you are not Sam Donaldson.

★ The number one mistake of BLMers giving interview? Our guess is use of jargon and acronyms. Strike them from your vocabulary!

★ For TV interviews, here are a few additional tips on technique:

- ★ Always look at the reporter, not the camera
- ★ Keep your hands out of your pockets
- ★ Don't wear sunglasses or light-sensitive glasses
- ★ Watch your body language and facial expression
- ★ Never read from a prepared statement
- ★ Look at yourself in the mirror before the interview. If something needs to be fixed, fix it.
- ★ Speak a little slower
- ★ If possible, do the interview somewhere other than behind a desk
- ★ Expect to be nervous, it's okay
- ★ Never say "no comment"
- ★ Assume the reporter needs help. Use verbal cues such as, "Our main point is . . ." or "The important thing to point out is . . ."
- ★ Dead air is the reporter's problem, not yours. Do not keep talking. It is a reporter's trick.
- ★ This sort of violates the BLM dress code, and isn't meant as an insult to the sartorial instincts of any employee, but don't wear plaid. No hats. No cigarettes. No chew. No belt buckles the size of a Volkswagen. (Okay, we concede on the last one. Go ahead and wear your biggest and shiniest belt buckle.)

How to Handle a Botched Story

In almost every news story, you'll find something that wasn't quite right or flat out inaccurate. In some instances, you'll see the reporter's bias shining through.

What do you do?

Get revenge?

No. Mark Twain said it's never wise to pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel. In nine cases out of ten (or maybe 99 in 100!) *let it slide*. If it's merely a difference in views or a minor inaccuracy, don't worry about it. Complain to a co-worker, whine to your spouse, then let go of it. Vengeance is only for the guys wearing white hats in those old cowboy movies. Your parents should have told you that life isn't always fair.

Sometimes, you will need to take action. For example, if the newspaper says your open house to discuss mining reform is on Tuesday and it's really on Wednesday, then you'd better make a quick phone call. Factual errors that could lead to negative consequences for the public need to be corrected right away.

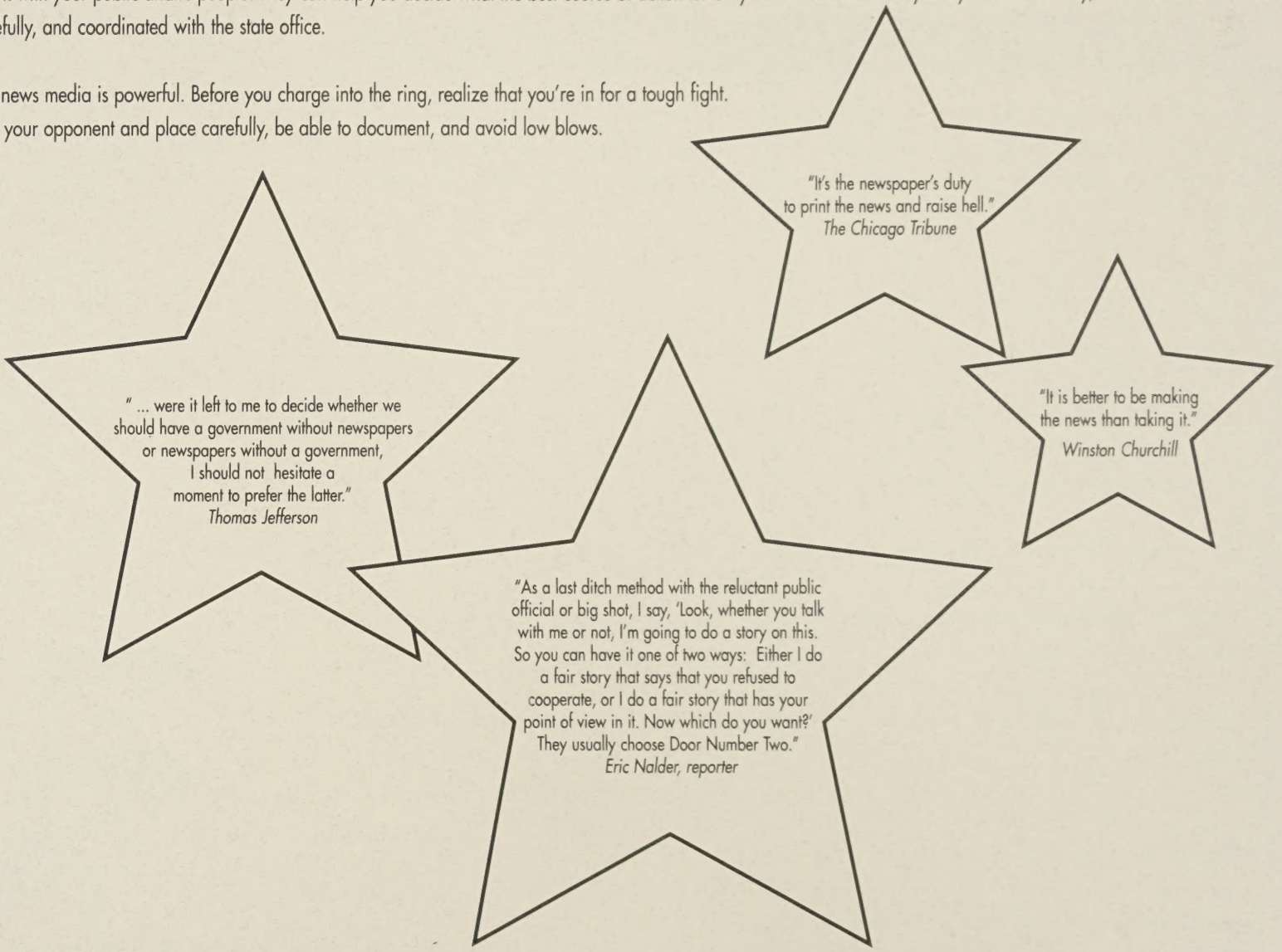
What about the occasional reporter who seems to be out to "get" us?

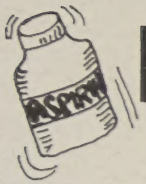
First, work all the harder with them to develop good stories. That's their bread and butter, and they'll usually appreciate the added attention. Spend time in the field with them. Educate them. Feed good story ideas to them. See if coverage doesn't improve.

But if the bashing continues, try a friendly phone call. Avoid going over the reporter's head (to an editor or a station manger) unless the situation is extreme and you can verify that important facts or information were left out. In larger cities, newspapers or TV stations may have a community relations person or ombudsman. That's good place to start if you have a complaint.

Work with your public affairs people. They can help you decide what the best course of action is. Only in rare cases should you try to rebut a story, and that should be done carefully, and coordinated with the state office.

The news media is powerful. Before you charge into the ring, realize that you're in for a tough fight. Pick your opponent and place carefully, be able to document, and avoid low blows.


"It's the newspaper's duty to print the news and raise hell."
The Chicago Tribune
" ... were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."
Thomas Jefferson
"It is better to be making the news than taking it."
Winston Churchill
"As a last ditch method with the reluctant public official or big shot, I say, 'Look, whether you talk with me or not, I'm going to do a story on this. So you can have it one of two ways: Either I do a fair story that says that you refused to cooperate, or I do a fair story that has your point of view in it. Now which do you want?' They usually choose Door Number Two."
Eric Nalder, reporter



WHEN YOU'RE LEFT TWISTING SLOWLY IN THE WIND . . .

Okay, this may be a shock to you, but occasionally BLM makes a mistake. Sometimes the mistake is big. When we do make a blunder, you can bet a reporter is going to be on hand to gather all the grim details. Hey, it's part of being a public agency . . . and part of their job. What do you do when a mob of reporters is tossing a rope across a tree bough? Every situation is a little different, but you can probably avoid rope burns by following these hints.

★ Be calm.

★ Be calm. There. Now that you've read it twice, maybe it will sink in.

★ Get the facts of the situation. If you have time, put together a fact sheet for the news reporters and others who are interested in the story.

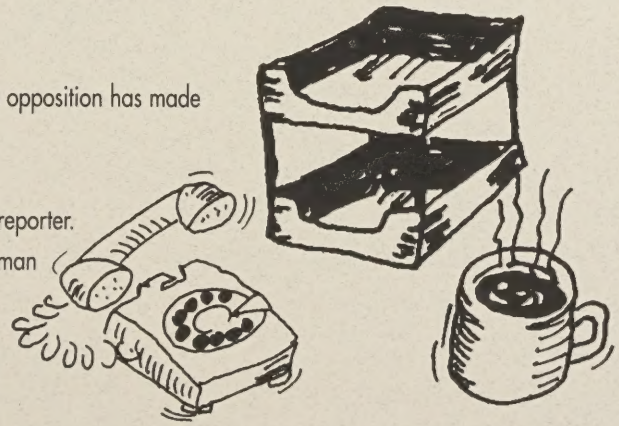
★ Acknowledge errors without whining or making excuses. Salvage whatever dignity you can.

★ Don't go into the "automatic defense mode." Don't argue or berate. You'll only dig yourself in deeper.

★ Talk about any corrective steps that are being taken or that are planned. If none are planned, then get with the decisionmaker and start planning some *immediately.*

★ You still can and should counter misinformation, but don't think you've won the game because the opposition has made a single error.

★ *And follow up!* If a few weeks later things have changed for the better, get back in touch with the reporter. When we've been through an uncomfortable situation, our instinct tells us to avoid it. This facet of human nature does not win us points with the news media. As sticky as it might be, get back in touch with reporters in a few days, weeks or months (whatever is appropriate, but you can't delay it until your retirement date) and let them know how things have changed for the better.



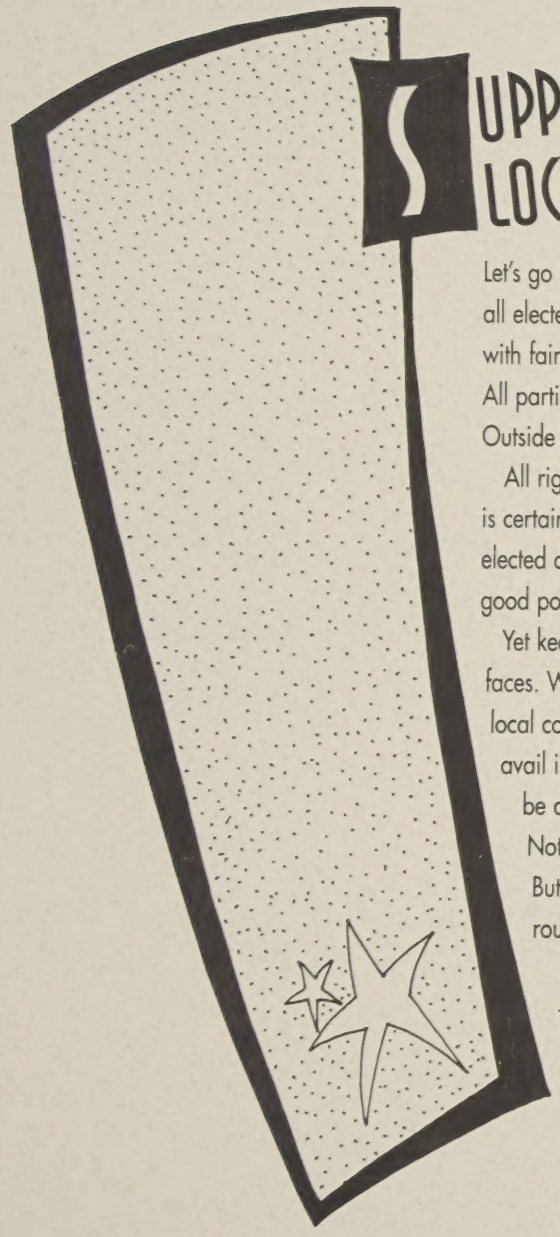
REMEMBER THE FUSS about proposed law enforcement regulations awhile ago? BLM got zapped on that one in more than one way. Consider some of the actions that were taken or not taken that spelled disaster:

- *no advance footwork with key publics or even within BLM*
- *poor flow of information within the organization*
- *inaccurate information conveyed to the public*
- *no standard messages until it was too late*
- *an "information vacuum" that was only too happily filled by anti-federal interests*
- *a $200,000 weapons order for our law enforcement personnel that was not related to the proposal (but which the public immediately linked with the proposal)*
- *and no overall communication plan.*

That's only part of the list.

Always ask, "What is the worst thing that can happen? What's the worst interpretation or spin anyone can put on this?" Then talk through those what-if situations. Expect Murphy's Law to be raging . . . and if you get off easier than anticipated, count it as a pleasant surprise.

"There are moments when everything goes well; don't be frightened, it won't last."
Jules Renar



SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL

Let's go back to our imaginary best of all worlds. In it, BLM would have an open, honest, and respectful relationship with all elected officials, from county commissioners to U.S. senators. When an issue arose, it would be discussed candidly, with fairness and understanding. The underlying principle guiding the process would be "What is best for the public?" All parties would be willing to compromise, as needed, with consensus as the means where decisions are made. Outside influences would not be a factor. Mutual trust would abound.

All right, pull yourself up from the floor and stop that annoying laughter. That kind of relationship with elected officials is certainly not the norm in these days of choppy political waters. The reality is a tense relationship exists between many elected officials and BLM. It's good politics these days to knock the federal government, especially in the West. It's *really* good politics to knock a federal agency that manages land in the West. Sound like anything we know?

Yet keeping our elected officials up to speed and, if possible, happy, is one of the most important tasks our agency faces. We can be doing amazing field work, be the model of administration efficiency, and be contributing to coffers of local communities in a dozen ways, but if we're getting bashed by the politicians, all of our good work may come to no avail in the public's eye. Like the news media, elected officials are a group with considerable power, and they need to be dealt with carefully.

Not that we want to roll over and play dead with our elected officials. That compromises our professional integrity. But there are some general strategies for working with folks who got more votes than their opponents last time round. Let's go through a few of those strategies.

★ ***Try not to say "no," but when you have to, make it sound like "yes." Learn how to disagree gracefully and tactfully.***

Elected folks have two main jobs. One, get things done for their constituents. Two, get re-elected. There is a definite tie between the two. Their livelihood, as well as that of their staff members, depends on what they can accomplish. Sometimes, that puts us at odds with them.

If that's the case, you can (1) Call them a bunch of jerks possessing cow-like intelligence and refuse to cooperate because you know they are wrong and you are right; or, (2) Politely hold your ground. We strongly suggest #2.

If you must disagree, do so softly, with style. Avoid phrases such as, "No," "We don't have the funding," "Sorry, we can't help," or our favorite of all time, "You seem, Senator, to be working under a misconception." Blood pressures are sure to instantly raise by about 100 points if you babble any of these statements. Instead, say something along the lines of, "This is what we can do," or "We understand your viewpoint. This is how we see the situation." Come up with your own pet phrases that will take the sting out of your statement. Be as cooperative as possible. It isn't that hard.

★ ***Talk with them in the bad times.***

When something isn't right, let them know. Let them in early. Yes, there is a danger (and most assuredly it will happen occasionally) that elected officials will use the information prematurely and cause your gastric juices to flow, but taking that calculated risk is better than surprising them. Other than perhaps state directors and your spouse ("Uh, didn't I tell you my mother is coming tomorrow to spend two weeks?") elected officials may despise a surprise the most.

★ ***Talk with them in the good times.***

Elected folks can get conditioned. If the only time they hear from you is during a crisis or when you want a favor, they will soon start associating you and the outfit with problems and requests. Do some positive footwork when no crises are on the horizon.

★ ***Speak and write in plain English.***

Don't hide behind acronyms, buzz words, gobbledygook. Be clear, specific and brief. Avoid trying to dazzle them with data, flow charts, flips charts, organizational charts, surveys, scientific studies, EISs, and so forth.

★ ***You can be technically right and politically wrong.***

It's time, once again, to peel off another layer of innocence. We can be right, know we're right, have all the data showing that we're right, have the blessing of high-ranking clergy, the Girls Scouts, and your next-door neighbors Gladys and Fred, but if it is politically wrong in the eyes of your elected officials, then forget it. *Chances are you won't get anywhere.* Well, we said it, and we're sorry, but we figure the message is better coming from a friend than having you learn it the hard way. It's a fact of political life. *In our day and age, you not only have to be right, but the political acceptance has to be right, too.* The words of Sam Whitlock, a former Idaho state director, are still true today. "In this day and age, nothing is black and white. You will be remembered in this outfit by the quality of your compromises."

What can you do in those situations where you are technically right and politically wrong? Cut the best possible deal is our best advice. Give up a little to get the bigger part of what you want and the resources need. If you're willing to bet it all on your action, consult with your bosses, then go ahead without the blessing of your elected officials, but be prepared to get creamed in the news, behind closed doors, in the grocery store, at the neighborhood Tupperware meeting and just about everywhere else you go.

★ ***Act quickly, but not rashly.***

Too often, we hide behind our ten-day turnaround standard. What other business has the luxury of taking ten days to answer a letter? If a quick phone call will do, make it, followed up by a letter or a visit.

★ ***Take them to the field. Let them talk with real BLM people. Show them what it's like on the ground. Get real dirt on their tasseled Italian loafers.***

We're not talking about elaborate tours here. Smaller is usually better. Public office holders and their staffers love to get their shoes dirty. They are almost always more understanding of other points-of-view when they're away from the office. It gives all of us the chance to establish a better working relationship and accomplish more cooperatively.

★ ***In every oyster, there is a pearl. Find the pearl.***

Well, we *think* there is a pearl in every oyster, but you get the point. Even the crankiest letter or phone call has the grain of a good idea or suggestion of conducting business in a better way. Too often, we get defensive too fast, overlook the grain of truth before us, and miss the opportunity to better serve the public and improve our relationship with public officials. Maintain an open mind.

★ ***Even the Chicago Bulls lose a game now and then.***

We look forward to the time when this statement is obsolete, because everyone who lives outside Illinois is tired of seeing the Bulls win 70 games a year. But here is the point: You've done your homework. You've stated your case. You've been responsive. You've even been nice about it. And you still get pickled by a public official. Oh well. Deal with it. Sometimes forces beyond our control are at work. We're not going to come out ahead on every issue with elected officials. It's part of the American system.

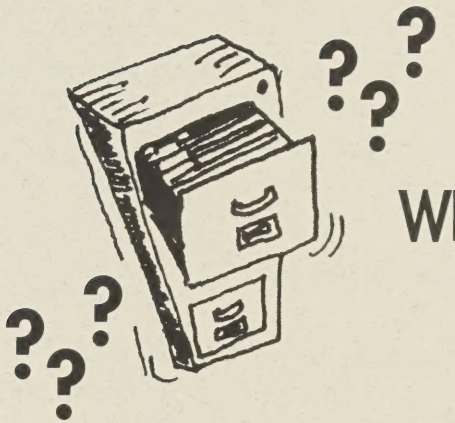
★ ***Be flexible to the point of getting mistaken for Jello.***

One approach doesn't work for every elected official. Learn what — and who — seems to work the best. Be flexible. If something isn't working, punt, and try again later. Note: We're not suggesting by using the word "flexible" that you abandon your principles or toss your integrity to the wind. Stay flexible in your *approach* to public officials is the point we're trying to make here.

★ ***Look ahead.***

With public officials, we tend to look behind too much, and not ahead. We base our whole impression and expectation on what our history with that person or persons tells us. Every sunrise brings a new day, and every issue brings the chance to re-create a working relationship with elected officials. Whew. Pretty philosophical for this little booklet's intention, but you get our drift. Learn from your experience, but also don't let it prejudice you in your next dealing with an elected officeholder. Things can change quickly, for better and worse, with elected officials.

Person-to-person communication is still the best. Take the time to get to know the public officials you work with. Be a real human being. The nature of our business is that storm clouds will always blow over, so do your best to provide good service and be professional about it all. In some day, in some way, it will pay off . . . and probably before your career is over!



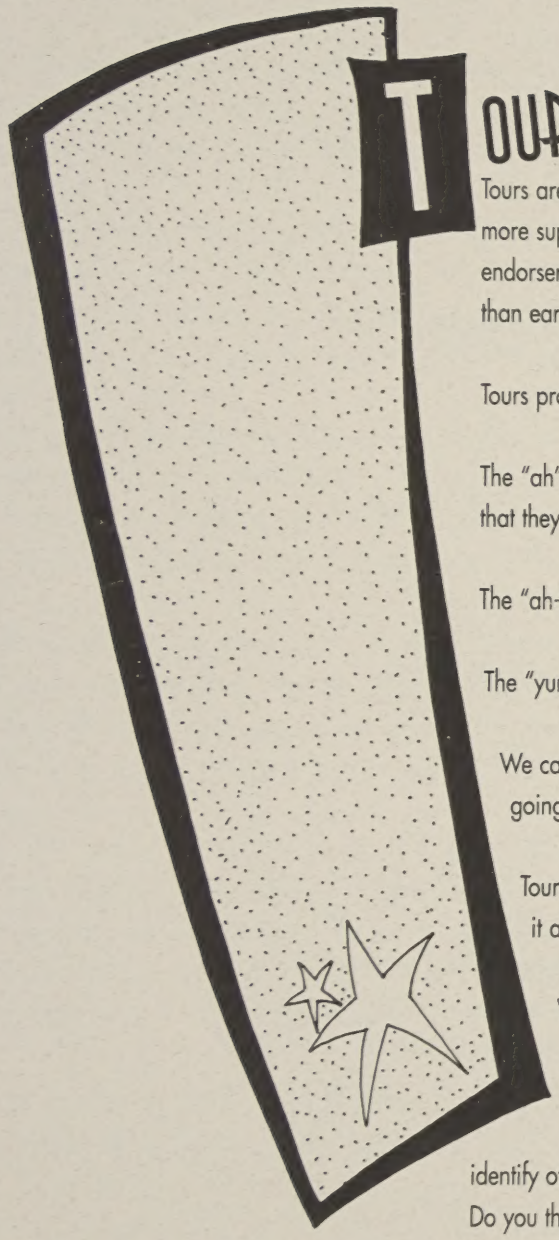
WHY PEOPLE LOSE CUSTOMERS

- ★ 68 percent cite an employee's "bad attitude"
- ★ 14 percent are dissatisfied with the product
- ★ 9 percent of customers are lost to competition
- ★ 5 percent received a recommendation from a friend to try another source
- ★ 3 percent moved away
- ★ 1 percent died

That means we have some element of control over 96 percent of the reasons why people don't come back!

Marketing studies show:

- ★ If a customer receives the service he or she expects, no one will be told.
- ★ If a customer receives outstanding service, the customer will tell five people about it.
- ★ If a customer receives poor service, 15 people will be told about it.



TOURS

Tours are one of the most potent tools we have at our disposal, but they're underused. When done correctly, a tour can gain more support and generate more understanding in a shorter amount of time than almost anything else we can do, short of an endorsement by Michael Jordan. ("When I'm on he basketball court, I often think of public land and how I'd rather be there than earning $31 million a year ..." Okay, we quit.)

Tours probably will be successful if they follow the Ah/Ah-ha/Yum rule of thumb.

The "ah" part is that we show the tour participants something so inspiring, interesting, beautiful or unique that they gasp for breath.

The "ah-hah" part is that we convey one or two important ideas that are carried home.

The "yum" part means that we arrange for good food and refreshments, and the other necessities of life.

We can almost hear you crying out in pain, "What!?! We have the premiere rangeland drilling project in the West going on and you're talking about good food as being a key to a tour?" Yes, our answer is yes.

Tours should be interesting and even fun. If you've gone to all the work to arrange one, then you might as well make it a memorable event.

Where do tours fall down?

- ★ They are boring.
- ★ They are too long.
- ★ Creature comforts are not available. (On a recent co-ed tour sponsored by a military agency that we will not identify other than to say it was the Air Force, not a single potty stop was arranged between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Do you think anybody gave a rip about what was being said after about 11 in the morning, especially after all that coffee and bouncing over gravel roads?)

MORE "WHERE DO TOURS FALL DOWN?"

★ There is no food or not enough food or not any good food.

★ The volume of information is overwhelming.

★ Travel accommodations are poor. (Never, ever, think, "We've got a seven person van, so we'll stick seven people in it." Go with the halvsies principle of comfortable seating. If you have a seven person van, arrange for no more than four people to ride in it. For a fifteen person van, eight is enough. Get the point?)

★ Handouts are poor quality, or worse, there are no handouts.

That's the list (face it, you're going to go through a lot of lists in this booklet) of what to avoid.
Here are a few more tips that you will want to pay attention to.

★ Always do a dry run of the tour. Always.

★ Beware of long stretches between stops on the tour. Anything over about a half-hour and you're risking everyone falling asleep. Ideally, there is enough time for discussion but not enough time for snoozing.

★ Have an information packet ready for distribution. Don't make it too long; no one wants to shuffle papers all day. It should, at a minimum, include a map, an agenda, and a list of the tour participants. Make good use of summaries. Pass out a page or two summary of a Draft EIS, for example, rather than the DEIS itself. (Although having some on hand is a good idea for the few EIS groupies who may show up.)

★ Know your audience. Size up the audience's knowledge before and during the tour by the questions they ask, facial expressions, body language and other cues.

★ Have a designated, all-powerful gatekeeper, whose one and only job is to keep the tour on schedule. When this person snaps his or her fingers, it means everyone back in the van *now*. The gatekeeper must be obeyed!

★ If your tour involves a bus or a caravan, have a pilot car or truck out front, especially if you leave the main road.

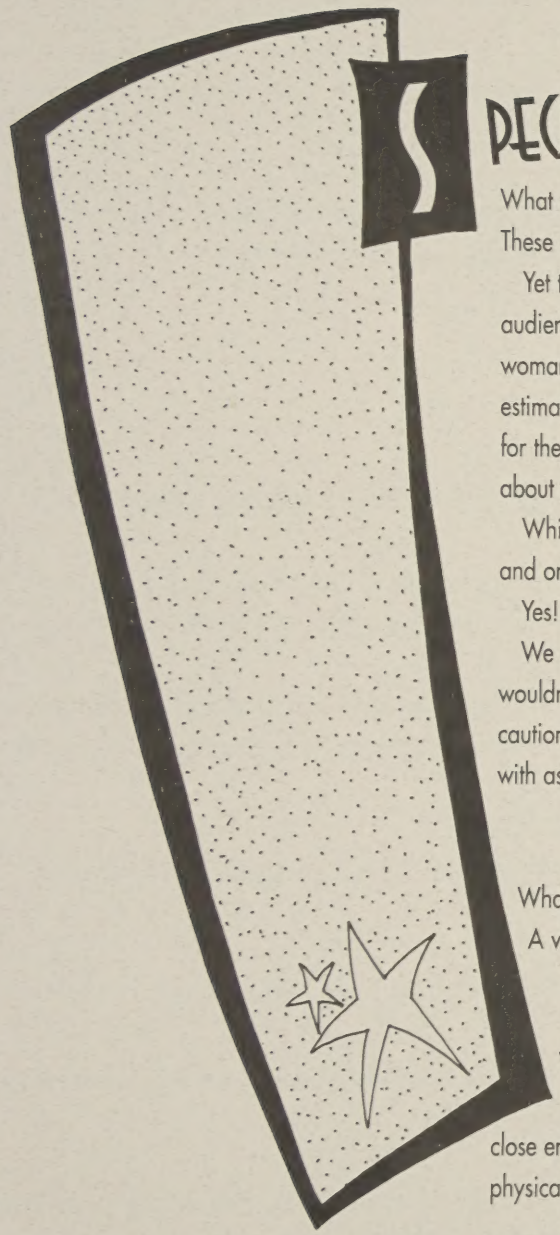
★ Assume the worst. Be prepared to deal with flat tires, mechanical breakdowns, motion sickness, poor weather, headaches, blisters, sunburn, thirst, rattlesnakes, unhappy ranchers, tired mountain bike riders, and whatever else is hiding in your tour anxiety closet.

★ Enlist drivers who are knowledgeable, courteous and pleasant. It helps, too, if they are good drivers.

★ Make sure you have the right people talking at the tour stops. We repeat, this may mean someone other than the manager or public affairs person.
Use common sense. You know who comes across well and who is prone to belly flops.

★ Involve the participants, not only in discussions, but in other ways. If you are stopping at a prime fishing stream, for instance, have a few rods all baited and ready to go. If you're visiting a renowned whitewater stream, spend a half-day on the river. That's one way to make a good impression!

The secret to a great tour is *plan, plan and then plan some more*. Work out every detail and every contingency. Leave nothing to chance. The tours that strike out inevitably are those where planning was kept to a minimum. It shows . . .and the difference between striking out and belting a home run is definitely worth the extra time and sweat.



SPECIAL EVENTS

What we mean by special events is dedications, ceremonies, conferences, and one-of-a-kind meetings. These are the kinds of get-togethers where everyone looks nice and is polite, and everyone is also usually very bored.

Yet these special events are becoming more common, not less popular. You'll be involved as a planner, guest, speaker or audience member sometime in the near future. For the sake of this section of the booklet, let's say that you're the man or woman in charge of a special event. You decide the prudent thing to do is hire a "meeting planner," until you get an estimate of several thousand dollars for the service, which is about several thousand dollars more than you had budgeted for the event. At this point, it becomes prudent to take control yourself. It causes you to quiver and tremble as you think about all that needs to be done.

Which is the whole point. When putting together one of these special events, you need to remember one word, and one word only: Plastics. Uh, let's try that again. The word you really need to remember is: Delegate.

Yes! You do not have to take upon yourself the troubles of putting the whole affair together!

We could go on and on about what you should do to prepare, but since no two special events are alike, our advice wouldn't be much good. Instead, let's look at the areas that you'll need to appoint someone to be in charge of. A word of caution — this is a very simple and basic review. Undoubtedly, you will need to fill in many more blanks. We'll now proceed with asking the 60 questions you need to answer to make sure that your special event is a big hit and not a big thud.

THE PROGRAM

What is the theme? Who will speak? For how long? What will take place during the program? Will music be a part of it? A video? What prominent local officials should be asked to participate?

LOCATION AND LOGISTICS

Where will it be? Inside or outside? If a ribbon-cutting or other focal point is part of the program, can everyone see? What if the weather is bad? Who will make sure the audio-visual needs are taken care of? Can the news media get close enough to shoot photos and video? Should BLM videotape the event? If so, who will do it? How is parking? Is the site physically accessible for all? Are ushers needed? Will tables and chairs need to be set up? Who will take them down?

(Wrong answer: you.) Is a registration or information table needed? Who will staff it? Do you need two-way radio capabilities? Do you need directional signs? Are the facilities adequate? Is drinking water available? Restrooms?

THE INVITATION LIST

Who is in charge of the invitations? Do the invitations need to be printed? When will they be sent ? (Hint: 30 days out is generally a minimum) Will follow-up calls need to be made? Who will keep the master list? Does a map need to be a part of the invitation?

PUBLICITY

Has the news media been contacted? Does a "backgrounder" need to be prepared? Will a news conference need to be a part of the activity? Will a news kit need to be prepared? Do you have extra copies of the news release on hand? Do biographies need to be written? Should other organizations be involved with the publicity? Have you made all the accommodations you can for the news media (special tables, good location, ability to plug into the sound system)?

SOCIAL EVENTS

Will there be a "get-acquainted" hour, luncheon or dinner? Who will be in charge?

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg. 85, OC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Who will preside? Who will be the MC? What background information do they need?

MISCELLANEOUS

Is someone assigned whose only job is to take care of last-minute details? What is the uniform of the day? Do you need fire control personnel? First aid? What about a clean-up crew? Who will meet and greet the guests? Who will escort the VIPs? Are motel accommodations needed for some guests? Have you arranged for a dry run and final inspection? Do you need security people on site? Do you have an appropriate memento for speakers?

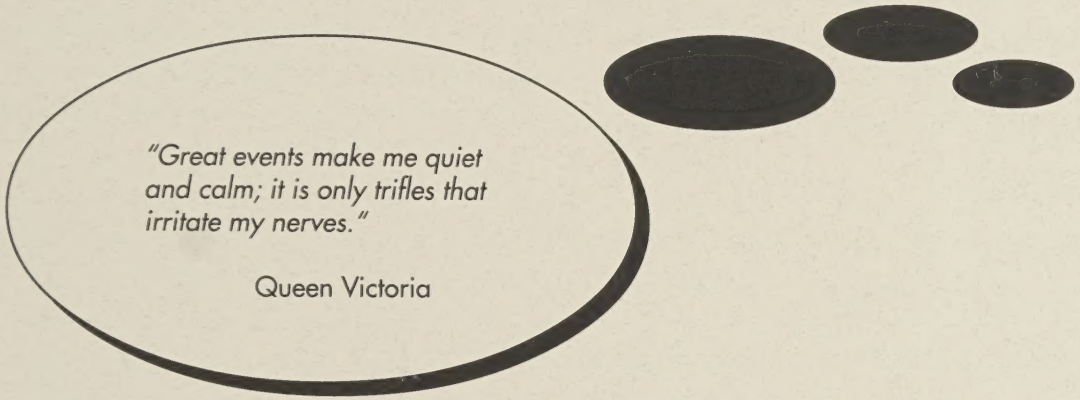
AFTERWARDS

How will you recognize those who helped pull this whole thing off? What thank-you letters need to be written? Have you set up a post-event meeting to critique the activity? Have you sent in a weekly highlight to the state office? As we said before, each special event will be different and one of the important things to remember is use lots of deodorant that day. No, let's see, what we really meant is stay flexible and loose, and know that everything will probably work out just fine if you've done the footwork and are prepared. If you know one of those unflappable employees, someone who is never flustered by anything, ("Bill, the building is on fire! Run for your life!" "Oh. Is that so? Well, I'll be along in a minute or two. Thanks.") you might want that person nearby on the day of the event, if for no other reason than to lean on his or her Zen-like qualities. Also, be prepared for about 1,247 details that crop up at the last minute, all of which need to be dealt with IMMEDIATELY.

Here comes the Voice of Experience, so listen. When you pull off a major special event, and it all goes flawlessly, don't expect anything more than a casual thanks from one or two of the bosses. If you get so much as a coffee cup or pen or pencil set as a non-monetary award, then you are really lucky, even if you've not slept in 72 hours and your spouse has threatened to visit out-of-town family members until the event is over because you are so cranky. For some reason, there never has been much recognition for all the work and great drops of sweat that go into making these things successful. If, on the other hand, the whole thing BOMBS, then expect nothing less than the cold shoulder for weeks on end, if not a reassignment as a recreation technician in Pahrump, Nevada, specializing in clean-up duty.

That's the life and ken of special events. Don't worry about it though, just go out and do your best. Your reward will come in heaven. Maybe.

Other than that, enjoy the experience.



OTHER TOOLS AND STUFF

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Every TV and radio station, by law, must donate some time to airing free "public service announcements," or PSAs. These days, it's tough to get any broadcast time for a PSA in a larger market (Boise, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, maybe Twin Falls and Lewiston) other than a few of those choice moments between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. You'll have lots of competition for the available time, and PSAs are usually slick productions these days. If you'd like to try PSAs anyway, call the radio or television station and find out what format works best and how much lead time is required. If you have a really worthy project and need PSA support, try to get an appointment with a station manager and see if you can get your project "adopted" by the broadcaster. If you want to run a video PSA, call Jerry Rohnert in the ISO and he may be able to help you get the video you need.

In the right circumstances, PSAs can be very effective and a cheap way to reach many people. The downside is that you are completely at the mercy of broadcasters, and the chances are that you won't get much air time.

NEWS CONFERENCES

News conferences work well when the announcement is a major one. Our advice is to hold them sparingly. It is still best to work one-on-one with reporters. If you decide to hold one, treat it as a special event and go over the list of questions. Above all, make sure the room is set up properly for a news conference and that your spokesperson is informed, articulate and able to answer difficult questions.

BRIEFINGS

Whether your briefing is in person or in writing, you need to stick with a few of the basics. First, keep it brief. (Hence the term "briefing.") Be concise and clear. If it is a written briefing, keep it to no more than a page and one-half. Second, anticipate the questions the boss will be asked and provide the necessary answers. Third, stick with the facts. Avoid giving your opinion, unless asked for it. Do prepare a recommendation, in case you are asked for one. Fourth, always provide a follow-up source of information, phone number, and pertinent back-up materials. Finally, if circumstances change, make sure the boss knows about it!

VIDEOS

Everyone, it seems, wants to get into the video business. Videos can do a lot of good, but they are very labor intensive, need a lot of lead time, expensive, and usually have a short shelf life. ISO 912 can help with your video, but make sure a video is really what you need. Ask yourself a few basic questions:

- ★ What is the message?
- ★ What is the audience?
- ★ How many people will see it?
- ★ How long will the video be useful?
- ★ How long will it be? (Hint: anything over ten minutes is difficult to produce. Five minutes or less is best.)
- ★ Can we afford it?

Weigh all the factors before deciding on a video. They're much more complex to put together than you probably realize. If you get the feeling that we're tossing a slightly damp towel on your plans for a video, you're right. Maybe a video news release is what you really want. They're easier and quicker to produce, and their use rate is good in Idaho. But if the need is definitely there, we'll put the whole force of BLM Productions to work for you.

MEETINGS

All of us get involved in public meetings at one time or another. We're a bureaucracy, right? That means that meetings are part of our professional life. Here's a reckless, bold statement, but heck, we're getting near the end of the booklet, so why not get a little crazy: many meetings are a waste of time. Agree? Even if you don't, would you go as far as saying many meetings are about as useful as your old slide rule? We'll cut a deal with you: if you think every meeting you attend is instructive and enlightening, then you can skip this section. We also suggest that you aren't being very objective about the meetings you attend!

Whether it is a small staff meeting or a public meeting attended by hundreds of people, a few generalizations hold true. Stand up, take a deep breath, get some chocolate or caffeine in your system, then come back and let's explore what those generalizations are.

★ STEP ONE

Ask yourself why you are having this meeting. Is it something you want to do? Required by law? Requested by the public? Your boss tells you to? Once you have figured out why you are having a meeting, it makes it easier to advance to the second step which is . . .

★ STEP TWO

Decide what you want out of the meeting. A simple way to assess this is answer the question, "What do I hope to have accomplished at the end of the meeting? " This is so basic, yet we often fail to do it. We can almost hear a few of you saying (while squirming, most likely), "Well, we know what the meeting is for! It's for, well, you know. It's to, uh, hmm, gosh, it's intuitive, that's what it is. We know what it's for, we just can't put it into words." If you're fumbling around like this, then it becomes all the more apparent that you need to clearly state the purpose or objectives of the meeting.

★ STEP THREE

Now that you know what you want from the meeting, you need to decide the best way to get it. Are there legal requirements that need to be met? Through comments or testimony? Reaction to a presentation? Informal discussion? Question and answers? You can probably sit down and figure out another dozen ways to squeeze what you need from those who attend.

★ STEP FOUR

And maybe this should be step 2A, but size up your audience. How many people will be there? What is their point of view? What is their knowledge level? Will they love us? Will they call us names? Will all sides of the issue be represented? How can you best make the meeting work for the audience?

★ STEP FIVE

Prepare an agenda. Actually, you'll probably prepare two. One for general use by the audience, and one with many more details on it for yourself. Any meeting planner with an IQ of at least room temperature will tell you that you are dooming yourself to failure if you don't develop a workable, logical agenda. IT IS THE ONE SINGLE THING YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE HOME (OR THE OFFICE) WITHOUT.

★ STEP SIX

Make sure the setting is appropriate for the meeting. Nothing will put people into a crabby mood quicker than if your meeting room is too crowded, not at a decent temperature, no one can hear or see visuals, or any of the other comforts of life are not provided. This is kind of a long-winded way of saying make sure all the logistics are taken care of. Make sure that the speakers know how much time they have, and hold them to it. Always start your meetings on time. Time is one of the most valuable of possessions, so don't waste yours and especially don't waste the public's.

★ STEP SEVEN

Assign key roles. Actually, this can be done well before now, and for large public meetings, should be one of the first tasks to accomplish. Here are a few roles that you should consider: ★ Meeting manager ★ Facilitator ★ Recorder ★ Decision maker ★ Note taker (not to be confused with the recorder!) ★ Room/equipment manager ★ Security ★ Receptionist/registration

Also, don't bunch up at the meeting. If the public sees a dozen BLM people all sitting together, it sends out messages that we don't want to communicate. Spread out at the meeting. Greet and meet those who attend.

★ STEP EIGHT

Evaluate. Determine what more needs to be done in the way of follow up to questions, issues, outcomes. This is the step that will help your next meeting come off even better!

Have you ever wondered how much money is spent on BLM meetings in a year? It doesn't show up in the budget as a separate category, (probably a good thing) but the price of agency meetings is staggering. Millions of dollars? Easily. Tens of millions? Hundreds of millions? Could be, when all the costs are factored in.

Since so much of our time and money is tied up in meetings, do the right thing. Organize your meetings. Know what you want from them. Make the meetings worth the time of those who attend. Listen to what is being said, and put good ideas into action. If you're able to do those things, your meetings will be a success and you'll find better acceptance of your decisions and activities.

Let's get our money's worth out of meetings!

> *"We don't hold meetings to be dumped on, yelled at or used for sport by opponents. We also don't hold meetings just to 'show the flag' ... 'convince 'em we are right' ... or to 'confuse and conquer.' We have tough decisions with the resource at stake and we want their help. If that's not your motive, DON'T HOLD A MEETING."*
>
> Paragraph from an obscure, but good, Forest Service publication

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCILS

You've just read a few pages about how to conduct an effective meeting. For Resource Advisory Councils, or RACs, there isn't much difference. Every one of the steps apply, even the one about knowing what you want from a meeting. Maybe we should say *especially* the one about knowing what you want from the meeting, because you definitely should have a firm idea about what you need from the RAC well before the gavel comes down and the meeting gets underway. Here's another hint, gleaned from years of experience at putting on advisory council type meetings: make sure the council members themselves know well in advance of the meeting what is expected of them. Don't tell them what you'd like the recommendation to be (no point in having a RAC, if that's the case) but what topic needs to be addressed and how you'd like the decision framed. Okay to say: "At our meeting on Thursday, we'd like you to formulate a recommendation about temporary non-renewable grazing." Not okay to say: "At our meeting on Thursday, we'd like you to recommend converting temporary non-renewable use on the ABC allotment to permanent use." See the difference? It's really not too subtle.

All right, it's late in the afternoon as this is written, and we're all a little drowsy from eating more at lunch than we should have. Suffice it to say that RAC meetings and other get-togethers using a citizen group to help gain information should be organized well, with a lot of planning and communication taking place *before* the RAC members file into the room. If you haven't done the footwork, the public will know.

NEWS RELEASES THAT GET RESULTS

The pressure is on. You've got a project that you think is newsworthy. You've mentioned it to your supervisor, and she thinks it is a great idea. "I'll be disappointed if that doesn't get a lot of coverage," she says as you leave her office. Having read this booklet and being a true believer in everything said in it, you've put together a public affairs plan. Part of it calls for a news release. How do you put one together that will work for you and the reporters?

The name of the game is to get some attention from either an editor or a reporter, without restoring to gimmicks and stunts, which should be attempted not more than about one per decade. Here is how to put together a good news release that will help garner attention.

★ Check your story and make sure the basic questions of who, what, where, when, why and how are answered. Try to answer them at the beginning of the story. Provide some kind of news or feature "hook" that will capture an editor's or reporter's attention. For example, a waterfowl improvement project dedication will probably draw a yawn from most reporters. A waterfowl improvement project dedication with the governor speaking will bring 'em in like flies.

★ Know your market. If you're working in a large town with a daily newspaper and local TV stations, your news release is really designed to catch the eye of an editor, so that your story will be assigned to a reporter. It will not be reprinted word for word in a large market, so don't waste time trying to make your news release sound as if it will appear on the front page of the New York Times because it won't. Accommodate deadlines. We probably blow more coverage by sending a news release out on Wednesday morning when we know darned well that most weeklies have a Tuesday afternoon deadline.

★ In a large market, roughly 200,000 people or more (that eliminates all but Boise, Spokane, and occasionally Salt Lake City), make your story short in most cases. A page or less. Give the basics, but don't overload it with long quotes or explanations. It's not uncommon for a daily newspaper to receive hundreds of releases a day. Editors just aren't going to have the time to wade through your single-spaced, four-page news release.

★ Double space or use 1.5 spaces in your releases.

★ Give your news release a headline with pizazz. We are all really, really awful when it comes to this. "BLM Plans Meeting." "Comment Deadline Set." Yuck! Strike those cliches from your memory!

★ Think visual, no matter what the medium. If there are opportunities for good video or photos, your chances of getting coverage zoom up because good visuals sell newspapers and attract viewers. It's perfectly okay to write a one-line note to editors at the end of the news release highlighting the visual opportunities. For small papers, supply a good black and white photo. You will make a lifelong friend of an editor.

If you supply photos, these shots are deadly:

- Shots of shaking hands, smiling and cutting ribbons. These are called grip and grins, and they will run only in the smallest of papers and only then if the editor is desperate.

- Black and white photos converted from slides. The technology is improving, but slides turned into B&Ws usually don't cut it, unless the shot is of something highly unusual, say Elvis at a wild horse adoption.

- Almost anything that is indoors and looks staged.

★ Use a quote or two, BUT not quotes that are self-indulgent, overblown, wordy, complicated, excessive or work too hard at being colorful. Good quotes illuminate and enlighten.

★ Follow-up calls are fine, as long as you don't overuse them. "Did you get the release about the national director's visit next week? Are you planning to cover his news conference? Anything you need from us?"

★ This is basic journalism, so for those of you who already know about it, skip to the next paragraph. When you put together your news release, use what journalists call the "inverted pyramid" format. Get the most important information in at the top of the story, less important information next, and so on until the end of the release. It's time to hold the mirror up to ourselves: BLM is not very good at doing this, sad to say. If we're announcing a public comment period, we tend to bury the address and due date near the bottom of the news release, when in reality, that's the information most important to the reader.

★ Here's a novel idea. Talk with the reporters in your area. Ask them what they like to see in a news release. Then follow their advice.

★ Take advantage of faxes and e-mail. Send your news releases electronically whenever you can.

★ This is basic, but we stumble on it a lot. Make sure the person you list as the contact will be available and is agreeable to handling the interviews. Too often, we put down someone as the news contact who is ready to leave for a week's vacation or attend an out-of-town meeting.

• Spell checkers aren't enough. Make sure at least one other person reads your release for content.

• If you have questions about style, content, format or whatever else, call the state office public affairs people and they'll give you help absolutely free of charge. Take their suggestions as nothing more than an attempt to make the news release more readable — and to make BLM look as professional in print and on the air waves as we are in real life!

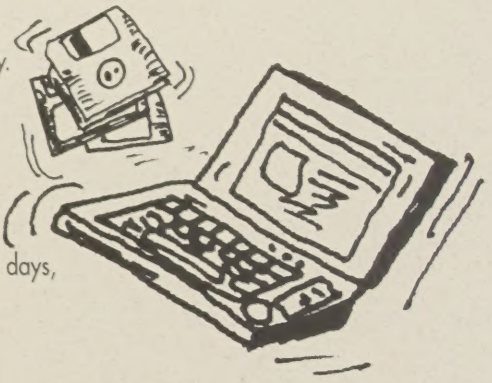
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We'll say just a little bit about community relations, which is a subset of public affairs. Community relations encompasses activities that you or your agency take on where the town or neighborhood you live in is the beneficiary. It may not have anything to do with managing land. It's a chance for you to be a good neighbor and solid citizen, to make your town a better place to live by acting for the community good as a BLM entity.

Here comes a compliment: most offices are very aware of community relations and do a good-to-great job at being a part of improving their community.

Because of that, we won't spend much more time telling you how to be a better citizen. You already know how to do that. The other reason is this booklet is almost 40 pages long, we're tired, and you're probably sick of reading it.

We're not suggesting that you do these things to serve any purpose other than enjoying participating within the community structure. You're not going to sponsor a Little League team, organize a clean-up of a local highway, support the local food bank, give blood, or be a partner with a school for any other reason that it's a good thing to do for the people who live in the community. Twenty years ago, highly paid public relations whizzes talked about building a "bank of good will," so that when something went wrong, the public would remember all the good things your outfit did and might call off the lynching party. That theory is mostly a lot of balderdash. (When the Exxon Valdez cracked up and dumped all the oil, no one was heard to say, "Yes, it's true they've ruined one of the most valuable wildlife areas in North America, but Exxon has long supported the arts.") Most people in the business recognize now that the bank of good will never really existed. Especially in the government these days, we're only as good as our last decision and the service we provided when someone wanted to purchase a map.



So concentrate on your community and figure out how you can help to improve it. Be visible. Tie in with other community groups. Why? Not because it's going to change many or any attitudes, but because it's the right thing to do. Don't count on it to save our goose when we're in hot water, but if we gain a pat on the back for our help, consider it gravy and a job done well.

Although he is the patron saint of that "other" agency, Gifford Pinchot had some good thoughts on public service that apply to BLMers today. Here is his advice to beginning foresters, given almost 90 years ago:

1. A public official is there to serve the public and not run them.
2. Public support of acts affecting public rights is absolutely required.
3. It is more trouble to consult the public than to ignore them, but that is what you are hired for.
4. Find out in advance what the public will stand for; if it is right and they won't stand for it, postpone action and educate them.
5. Use the press first, last and all the time if you want to reach the public.
6. Get rid of the attitude of personal arrogance or pride of attainment of superior knowledge.
7. Don't try any sly or foxy politics because a forester is not a politician.
8. Learn tact simply by being absolutely honest and sincere, and by learning to recognize the point of view of the other man and meet him with arguments he will understand.
9. Don't be afraid to give credit to someone else even when it belongs to you; not to do so is the sure mark of a weak man, but to do so is the hardest lesson to learn; encourage others to do things; you may accomplish many things through others that you can't get done on your single initiative.
10. Don't be a knocker; use persuasion rather than force, when possible; plenty of knockers are to be had; your job is to promote unity.
11. Don't make enemies unnecessarily and for trivial reasons; if you are any good you will make plenty of them on matters of straight honesty and public policy and will need all the support you can get.

SUMMARY

We're not big fans of long summaries. So we'll put down a few nuggets of public affairs wisdom and call it good.

- ★ Use your own good sense. If something doesn't seem right to you, don't do it. If something does seem right, check with the boss, and go for it.
- ★ Always have a message. Always have a plan.
- ★ Try to make things happen. Avoid letting things happen to you.
- ★ Be honest and fair.
- ★ Consider your audience.
- ★ If you can't explain what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how it benefits the American public, go back to the drawing board.
- ★ Don't hesitate to ask for help.
- ★ Smile, even during the bad times. You'll cause your enemies to worry about what you know that they don't; your friends will think you are calm, poised and under control; and you might gain a little sympathy from the public because everyone feels sorry for an idiot.

Thanks for sticking with us through these 40 pages. We hope it was fun and that you learned something that will make your job more enjoyable.

ONE MORE LAST THING AND THIS TIME WE MEAN IT . . .

This isn't an ironclad promise (or threat, depending on how you've liked this booklet), but we may update it every so often. If you'd like more information on a topic, or we've overlooked something entirely, then let us know at ISO 912 and we may take a run at it in the next version. Call the external affairs manager or just about anyone on the staff and we'll grab a pencil and start jotting down your suggestions. If you have some good experiences or insights, share them with us, and we might include them in the next edition. It is your chance to be famous, in a limited sort of way.

Brought to you by Idaho State Office External Affairs, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709 · (208) 373-4015

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